

Coins

Off-center query rates reply that's strictly on target

By Roger Boye ²¹⁵

MORE READER questions are answered in this week's column.

Q—Should I save an unusual \$1 bill (series 1974) that I got in change last week? The design on the reverse is not centered properly, leaving almost no margin on two sides of the bill and an extra-wide margin on the other two sides. The front design is normal. Also, how did this mistake happen? — J. O., Hammond, Ind.

A—Your bill is not rare, although it probably has some small collector value if it is in at least very fine condition. The backside of currency is printed first, 32 notes on a large sheet of paper. The sheet containing your bill was either misaligned or folded slightly while in the printing press, causing the off-center design.

Obviously, the problem was corrected before the front design was printed.

Q—A neighbor tells us that nickels made during World War II are valuable. Is that true? We have a jar full of them. — S. D., Chicago

A—Most nickels made during the war contain 35 per cent silver but no nickel, a critical war material. They are easy to identify because they have a large mint mark above the dome of the Monticello on the tails side.

Many dealers will pay at least 25 cents each for the coins because of their silver content, and war nickels in the better conditions are worth even more. Starting in 1946, nickels were

again made of 75 per cent copper and 25 per cent nickel.

Q—My mother has a 1943 copper cent. I'm told it is probably worth thousands of dollars because the government supposedly made only "steel" cents that year. What do you think? — C. H., Palos Hills

A—Although a few genuine 1943 copper cents exist, thousands of fakes have been produced over the years. Some are made by copper-plating the 1943 zinc-coated steel cents, and others are created by altering the date on a 1948 copper cent.

Chances are great that your coin is one of these worthless fakes, but you should have it examined by an expert to be sure.

Q—I have a 1923 silver dollar with a misprint in the word "Trust" — there's a "V" instead of a "U." Does this error have any special value? — G. L., Berwyn

A—The "U" was engraved as a "V" on all of the so-called Peace dollars made from 1921 to 1935, and on other coins, including the standing Liberty quarter made from 1916 to 1930. The designers of these coins simply decided to use the old Roman alphabet where the "U" was a "V."

Dealers sell 1923 dollars in very fine condition for about \$6.50.

If you have questions about coins or collecting, write Roger Boye, Arts & Fun, Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Av., Chicago, Ill. 60611. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a personal reply, and do not send coins.